

Remarks/Arguments

In the October 1, 2003 final office action, claims 1-4 were rejected under section 103 as being unpatentable over Peterson (US Patent No. 3,631,930) in view of Hunck et al (US Patent No. 4,276,896).

In response to the rejection, claims 1-4 are cancelled, and new claims 5-13 are submitted. New claims 5-13 do not include any new matter.

New claim 5 is patentable over Peterson and Hunck et al. New claim 5 specifies a front mower deck with a front hydraulic motor to rotate a front cutting blade, a left mower deck with a left hydraulic motor to rotate a left cutting blade, and a right mower deck with a right hydraulic motor to rotate a right cutting blade; the left and right mower decks being lowerable to an operating position and raiseable to a non-operating position. Peterson and Hunck et al do not relate to mower decks with hydraulic motors that rotate cutting blades and that may be raised or lowered. Instead, Peterson relates to a mounting arrangement for bulldozer blades. Hunck et al relates to a flow control valve assembly for a front wheel drive system.

New claim 5 also specifies a hydraulic circuit directing exit flow from the front hydraulic motor to the left hydraulic motor if the left mower deck is lowered to the operating position, or to the right hydraulic motor if the right mower deck is lowered to the operating position. Peterson and Hunck et al fail to show a hydraulic circuit that directs flow to either of two motors based on which mower deck is lowered to an operating position. Peterson and Hunck et al also fail to show a solenoid-operated directional control valve that is energized if a mower deck is lowered to an operating position.

New claim 6 is patentable over Peterson and Hunck et al for at least the same reasons as base claim 5.

New claim 7 is patentable over Peterson and Hunck et al for at least the same reasons as base claim 5. Additionally, new claim 7 specifies a relief valve in the hydraulic circuit around each of the left and right hydraulic motors. Peterson and Hunck et al fail to disclose such relief valves around each motor.

New claim 8 is patentable over Peterson and Hunck et al. New claim 8 specifies a first solenoid-operated directional control valve that is energized by moving a second hydraulic motor into an operating position causing the first

solenoid-operated directional control valve to provide a first pilot signal to a first pilot-operated directional control valve that opens in response to the first pilot signal to direct hydraulic fluid from the exit of the first hydraulic motor to the second hydraulic motor. Peterson fails to show the claimed structure. Instead, Peterson relates to a mounting arrangement for bulldozer blades having control valves 53-57 which are three position valves permitting selective extension or retraction of the respective hydraulic motors to align the bulldozer blade. See Peterson at column 3, lines 24-27. Hunck et al fails to show the claimed structure. Instead, Hunck et al relates to a hydrostatic front wheel drive system for a tractor, with first and second supply passages connected to reverse and forward pilot passages, and that can be connected in series for low torque operation or in parallel when high torque at the wheels is required.

New claim 8 also specifies the first solenoid-operated directional control valve may be de-energized by moving the second hydraulic motor into a non-operating position causing the first solenoid-operated directional control valve to end the pilot signal and the first pilot-operated directional control valve to close so that the hydraulic fluid from the exit of the first hydraulic motor bypasses the second hydraulic motor. Peterson and Hunck et al fail to show the claimed structure.

New claim 9 is patentable over Peterson and Hunck et al for at least the same reasons as base claim 8.

New claim 10 is patentable over Peterson and Hunck et al for at least the same reasons as base claim 8. Additionally, new claim 10 specifies that each hydraulic motor is mounted on a mower deck. Peterson and Hunck et al fail to show hydraulic motors mounted on mower decks.

New claim 11 is patentable over Peterson and Hunck et al for at least the same reasons as base claim 8 and intermediate claim 10. Additionally, new claim 11 specifies each hydraulic motor is moved to the operating position by lowering the mower deck. Peterson and Hunck et al do not show any hydraulic motors that are moved to operating positions by lowering mower decks.

New claim 12 is patentable over Peterson and Hunck et al. New claim 12 specifies a plurality of solenoid-operated control valves, each solenoid-operated control valve associated with a hydraulic motor on a mower deck and providing a pilot signal if the mower deck is in the operating position. Peterson and Hunck et al

fail to show a plurality of solenoid-operated control valves, each associated with a hydraulic motor on a mower deck. Peterson does not show any solenoid-operated control valves. Hunck et al's reverse and forward solenoids are not each associated with a hydraulic motor, and Hunck et al fails to show a mower deck.

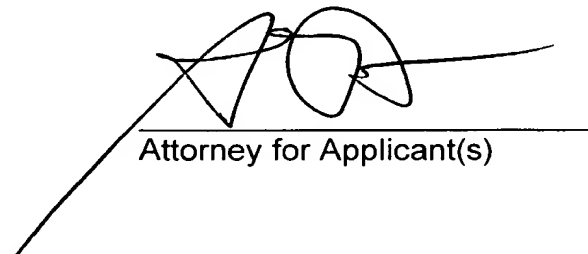
New claim 12 also specifies a plurality of pilot operated control valves operatively connected to the solenoid-operated control valves; each pilot operated control valve opening hydraulic flow to one of the hydraulic motors in the presence of a pilot signal associated with that motor and closing hydraulic flow to the hydraulic motor in the absence of the pilot signal; the pilot operated control valves opening to provide hydraulic flow to a plurality of hydraulic motors in series in the presence of a plurality of pilot signals. Peterson fails to show any pilot operated control valves. Hunck et al does not use a pilot operated control valve to open hydraulic flow to one of the hydraulic motors, but instead feeds both the first and second fluid motors 130 and 132 in either series or parallel, depending on required torque. Thus, Hunck et al fails to show solenoid-operated control valves that open hydraulic flow to a selected hydraulic motor.

New claim 13 is patentable over Peterson and Hunck et al for at least the same reasons as base claim 12. Additionally, new claim 13 specifies at least one hydraulic motor on a mower deck that is not associated with a solenoid-operated control valve. Neither Peterson nor Hunck et al show a hydraulic motor on a mower deck that is not associated with a solenoid-operated control valve.

In conclusion, it is believed that this application is in condition for allowance, and such allowance is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully,



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